



# Department of Public Works

County of Butte

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April 12, 2006

Bill Brattain,  
California Regional Water Quality Control Board  
Central Valley Region, Sacramento Office  
11020 Sun Center Dr #200  
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-6114

**RE: Comments Regarding Draft General Waste Discharge Requirements and Monitoring and Reporting Program for Discharges of Green Waste for Composting Within the Central Valley Region**

Dear Mr. Brattain,

The County of Butte owns and operates a Municipal Solid Waste Landfill. The following comments are offered regarding the California Regional Water Quality Control Board Draft Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) for composting in the Central Valley.

#### Applicability

The February 10, 2006 notice to "Green Waste Composting Industry and Other Interested Parties" states that "The proposed General WDRs would apply to existing facilities and any future facilities meeting certain criteria that plan to conduct green waste composting in our region." Throughout the draft WDRs, however, the phrase "green waste operations" are used. In trying to decipher the Regional Board's intent, I referred to Attachment A of the Draft WDRs, and found the following definition for "composting." I have added italics to an area of particular importance.

"Composting," means the biological decomposition and stabilization of organic materials under conditions that impede the escape of biologically produced heat to the point that portions of the material exceed 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit). The term includes activities that use this process to produce a final product that is stable, free of pathogens and viable plant seeds, and that can be beneficially applied to land. *The term also includes, and this Order applies to, an accumulation of at least 500 cubic yards of green waste, including that produced by chipping or grinding, if such accumulation remains on-site for more than seven days and under conditions where the composting process has occurred, or is likely to occur, whether or not intentionally.*

Thus, it appears that the Draft WDRs apply not only to compost facilities or proposed compost facilities, but also to any facility that stockpiles green waste as part of its operation, due to the potential for biological decomposition. In effect, despite the Regional Board's assertion, these Draft WDRs will affect facilities that stockpile green waste for Alternative Daily Cover (ADC), as well as for cogeneration and erosion control. If the Regional Board's intent is to apply the WDRs to facilities that stockpile green waste, the title of the WDR should be changed to more accurately reflect that more than just compost

facilities are being subject to regulation. Additionally, the mailing list used by the Regional Board to notify "interested parties" only includes the compost industry, local enforcement agencies, and what looks to be facilities that currently have compost operations. As a suggestion, Regional Board staff should make an effort to also notify "potentially affected facilities," which would include facilities that stockpile green waste not specifically for use in composting.

### Impact of Draft WDRs

Butte County (Butte Regional Waste Management Authority) for several years has had a desire to begin some level of composting as an addition to the county's AB939 programs. For the past several years, we have waited for the Draft WDRs, in order to begin planning for a future compost operation, which has been noted in the Authority's AB939 Annual Report to the California Integrated Waste Management Board. Having seen the Draft WDRs, Butte County may not be able to site a compost facility due to the extreme prescriptive requirements that are proposed. Regardless of size, compost facilities would require composite-lined retention basins designed for 100 year flood events, run-on/run-off control, and concrete or asphalt pads with 1 percent slopes for stockpiling green waste and compost, and monitoring/control of leachate. The Regional Board, in the information sheet states "... this General Order provides a streamlined, low-cost means of regulating these similar discharges," however, it is unlikely that the County and particularly, Neal Road Landfill, could ever create the economies of scale that would be necessary to compost green waste without significant increases to user fees. The Draft WDRs will not be a "low cost means" to regulate composting in Butte County, as stated in the Regional Board's information sheet.

Particularly concerning to the landfill operation is that the impact of the Draft WDRs will be significantly more burdensome if they apply to all green waste stockpiles greater than 500 cubic yards that have a possibility of undergoing decomposition, rather than just compost facilities. This would create a disincentive to collect green waste for cogeneration in Butte County, where significant quantities are required to contract with a vendor for grinding and removal. Besides, cogeneration fuel, green waste is stockpiled for grinding as Alternative Daily Cover. As a result of the Draft WDRs, all green waste would most likely go immediately to the landfill as waste, instead of using the product for a beneficial use.

In conclusion, I believe the Draft WDRs as written are vague as to the facilities that would be regulated, and I would like to be included on mailing lists for future notices on this topic, at the letterhead address. Additionally, the Draft WDRs as written will significantly impact the economics of green waste activities in Butte County, with little or no environmental benefit. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, I can be reached at 530-538-7681.

Sincerely,



Bill Mannel

Manager, Solid Waste Program

CC: Butte Regional Waste Management Authority  
Butte County Solid Waste Committee  
Katie Bowman, Regional Water Quality Control Board, Redding Office